

Summary and Introduction

- The purpose of the mobile police station is to increase the perception of safety and to make the police more visible and accessible to the public
- Violence in public places and bar districts like Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen decreased by 33 percent during the weekends from the 1th of May till the 30th of October 2006, compared with the corresponding period in 2005
- The area that is affected is geographically well defined and is determined by the area that can be patrolled
- Visible and accessible police to increase perceived safety
- Leadership behaviour - can be developed
- Working - patrolling two and two, establish contacts with the security guards / citizens / restaurant managers
- Areas of improvement - the technology / logistics have not worked sufficiently well

The mobile police stations are situated in the bar district in Stockholm, Sweden, Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen, every Friday and Saturday evening. At Stureplan the working hours are 9.30 PM to 05.30 AM and at Medborgarplatsen the working hours are 00 PM to 04.00 AM. The choice of the two locations has been made on the basis of concentration of crime in those places, so called hot spots and on the basis of intensity in time, hot times. The purpose of the mobile police station is to increase security and to make the police more visible and accessible to the public.

The problem was related to the fact that in 2005 violence in public places increased by 14 per cent, in the City Center of Stockholm, Sweden. The crimes studied were outdoor crimes like assault, rape and robbery. The mobile police station started as a way of dealing with this problem. The evaluation was conducted on Friday and Saturday evenings/nights from May to October in 2006.

In the evaluation of the mobile police stations we used both a questionnaire and interviews and an evaluation form that the police officers had to fill out each night, and police reported crimes. Security guards and restaurant managers were interviewed concerning their perception of the mobile police stations. A questionnaire was handed out to the public in one of the locations.

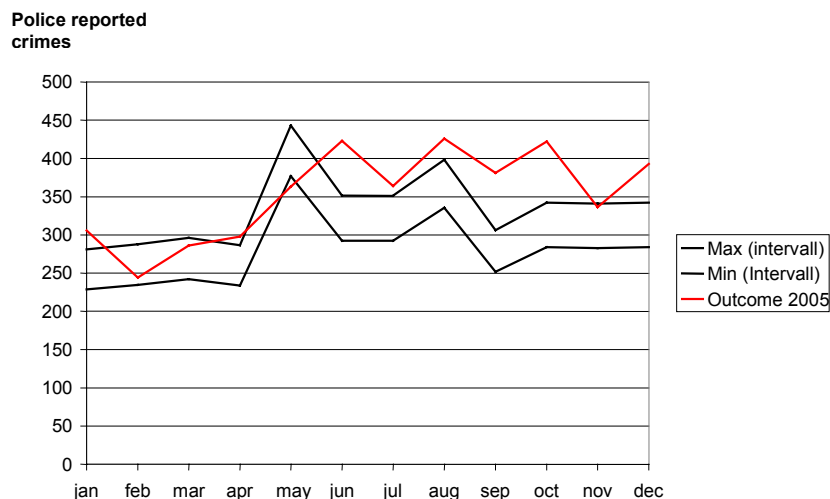


Figure 1. Violence in public places in City pmd - LUPP 2005

Method

In order to evaluate the mobile police stations, the concepts – safety and visible/accessible police were defined. In the project the concepts of leadership behaviour and areas of development were also considered of importance and studied.

Perception of Safety

In order to measure safety three police students handed out questionnaires to individuals who were at Medborgar-platsen one weekend (during the opening hours of the mobile police station). The police

students also interviewed security guards and restaurant managers to get their point of view on the mobile police station. Another way to measure safety is to measure the number of reported crimes in the area. A reduction of reported crimes doesn't mean increased safety per se but could be an indicator of less criminality. The objective for 2006 was to reduce the crimes in public places with 10 per cent. Therefore, all reported crimes; outdoor assaults, rape and robbery during Friday, Saturday or Sunday from May to October were studied. The reported crimes in the geographical areas connected to Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen have been studied. The statistics for 2006 have been compared with the corresponding statistics for 2005.

A visible and accessible police

In order to be visible and accessible it was important that the police officers didn't have to leave the mobile police station to do other kind of police work. Therefore one of the questions in the every day evaluation of the work at the mobile police station was if some or all of the police officers had left during the evening. The question was: did you have any other missions during the evening that forced someone or all of you to leave the mobile police station of Stureplan/Medborgarplatsen? The possible answers were:

- Yes, one of us had to leave
- Yes, several of us were taken up by other work had to leave
- No, we were able to perform our work at the mobile police station

To identify what kind of day-to-day work that was going on at the mobile police station, the following question was asked; How did you work in the group, what worked / what didn't work / what's promising? What purposes do you perceive that the mobile police station filled tonight? Give examples from your work, events that were solved during the evening.

The questions were aimed at measuring how visible the police officers were to the public.

Leadership behaviour

How visible and accessible was the senior managers for the police officers? One indicator was if any senior manager physically had visited the mobile police station. Senior manager refers to the 35 highest-ranking police officers in City, like the District Police Commissioner and Superintendents.

Day-to-day work

In the evaluation forms, the group that worked responded to the question "What have you been doing tonight? (examples were given like working with youth/youth offenders, drugs, alcohol...).

Areas of Development

The question of possible improvements was formulated like this: make any suggestions about possible improvements. What has been good (important to be able to retain what is good), what can be improved. Consider especially possible improvements related to visibility, accessibility and response.

The mobile police station's work instructions

The instruction laid down that the mobile police stations were included in the City Centre Weekend posting, and that the local head of the mobile police station was responsible for the following:

- Business is conducted in accordance with the goals and objectives and / or given instructions from the operational management team.
- External and internal synergy promoted
- Establish and keeping the mobile police station open and staffed during the working hours.
- The task is done with personnel that are trained for the task.
- At least 2 police officers are available at the mobile police station at all times.

- Police officers are on the beat within a radius of 500 meters from the mobile police station.
- Fill out evaluation forms with proposals for areas of improvements.
- The mobile police stations and the equipment are restored after the end of the pass. Cars and other equipment should be brought back to the station at the end of the work shift.

Results

Violence in public places

During the period from May to October, 2006, the number of reported violent crimes decreased by 4 per cent in the City Centre, compared with the corresponding period in 2005. Violence in public places crimes decreased by 6 percent (figure 2). If we study the crimes that occurred in the area of the mobile police station, the results show that violence in public places decreased by about 33 percent, 172 crimes were reported in 2005, and 114 crimes in 2006 (map 1 and map 2) on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, i.e. for the time period when the mobile police station was expected to have an impact on crime. During the period from May to October 2006 nearly 140 fewer crimes were reported than during the corresponding period of 2005. That means that approximately 40 per cent of the decline is due to the mobile police offices.

Police reported crimes

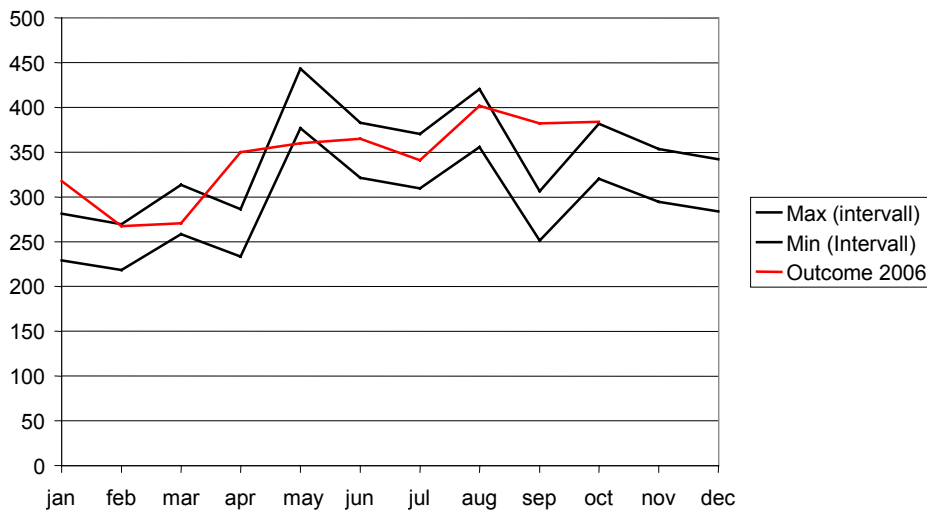
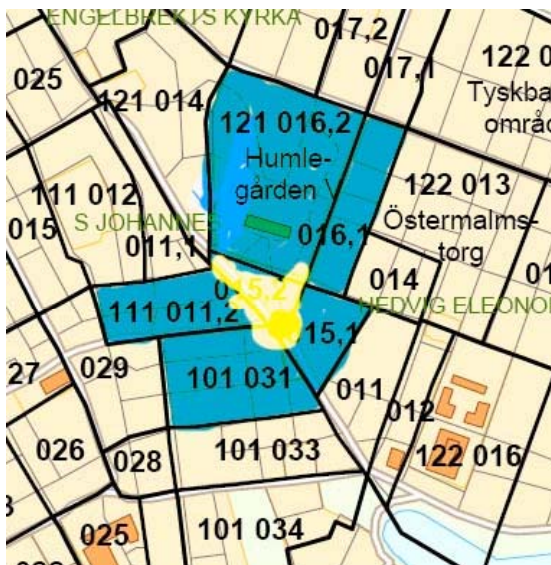
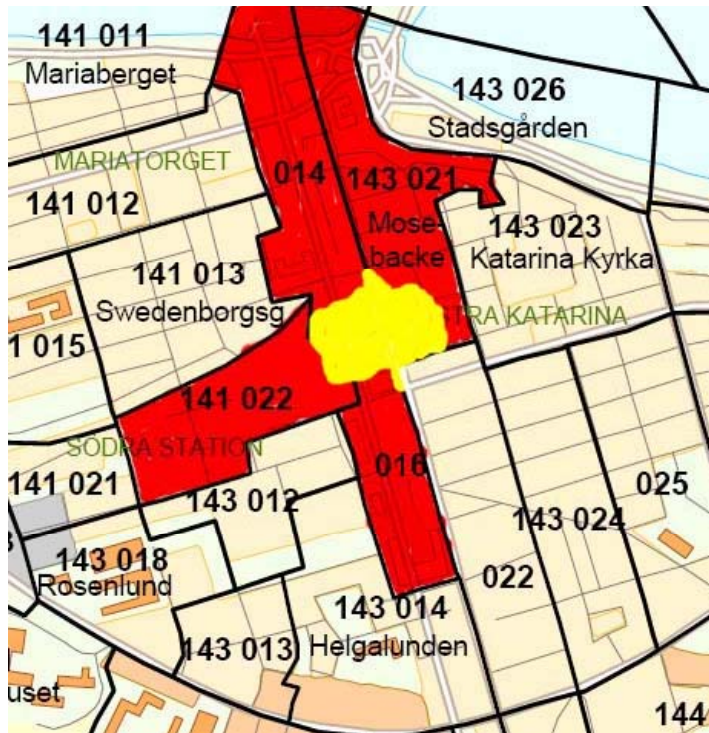


Figure 2. Violence in public places - LUPP 2006.



Map 1. Geographical area (Stureplan): areas where the work of the mobile police station might have had an impact on criminality and in yellow, in yellow, areas where a positive impact could be demonstrated.



Map 2. Geographical area (Medborgarplatsen): areas where the work of the mobile police station might have had an impact on criminality and in yellow, in yellow, areas where a positive impact could be demonstrated

Comments from the public, security guards and restaurant managers.

Three police students handed out questionnaires to 64 persons, 32 men and 32 women who were at Medborgar-platsen (the area where one of the mobile police stations was situated). The police students interviewed five security guards as well as five restaurant managers and two police officers. Of the 64 respondents, 45 replied that they felt safer with the mobile police station in place. The remaining 19 respondents stated that they didn't feel any difference compared to before. None of the respondents perceived the mobile police station as disruptive. Restaurant managers perceived the mobile police station as good for the safety or indicated that they didn't have any experience or contacts with the police. However, four out of five restaurant managers were convinced that the mobile police station was preventing crimes. The five security guards interviewed said they felt that the mobile police station made their working environment safer. The security guards felt that mobile police station was preventing crime and making the area safer. The two interviewed police officers described their work as being fun from time to time but sometimes quite hard. Sometimes they had to mingle, or found themselves at a mingel-party for eight hours which was both rewarding and exhausting. They have noted that they are often met with appreciation. But not when you seize alcohol from someone. The people who have a negative attitude towards the police probably just pass by the station. The idea that the police will come closer to the citizen is good, according to their opinion, however, they still need to think about the working environment and opportunities to have a break.

What worked and what have the police officers been doing.

In the answers to the evaluation forms many describe how the police officers have stopped persons who intended to start a fight. This early intervention is something that is often stressed as being crime preventive. When the mobile police stations were new, we didn't know what kind of methodology would be successful. Over time, it appears that main tasks for the mobile police station are to answer questions from the public, to confiscate alcohol, take care of the heavily drunk and to quickly be in place to avert incidents.

With a visible and accessible police in the bar districts, we have been able to fight against criminality and

diminish public disturbances. Hopefully the perceived safety of the visitors at Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen increased.

A visible and accessible police

The concept of a visible and accessible police can be illustrated by the following quotations from the evaluation forms:

"The contact with the public is positive." "The overall impression is that the mobile police station in Medborgarplatsen was appreciated. Of the many visitors we had during the evening virtually all were in favour of the clear police presence. In addition, we could inform the public and respond to the public's many *issues*

Visibility and police presence in our work with alcohol-related violent crimes.

Security guards have brought aggressive persons to the police station.
Control of street vendors.

Even the mounted police have contributed to increase the visibility of the police. The mounted police has been in the parks nearby. The mobile police station has also acted as a focal point for other staff, at least in the early evening before the different police interventions take up too much time. Visits from other police forces have led to a higher police visibility in these areas.

A few times during the period the police officers have been forced to leave the station to report on their own tasks, but otherwise they have been able to work without being disturbed.

A few times the station has suffered from a lack of staff, but they were exceptions. The investigative staff has not always been wearing a uniform, which was pointed out as a drawback in terms of visibility. That is why some groups submitted a proposal that all staff should wear a uniform and a reflective vest in order to increase the police presence, accessibility and visibility.

Leadership behaviour

External superintendents have often stopped by at the station during 15-60 minutes at each work shift. Many have had visits during one or more hours from managers from the so called 35 Group, and a number of executives from the 35 Group have stayed during the whole work shift during this period. To participate in or to be present at the mobile police station is a way of working with the visible leadership that is a part of the concept of "leadership behaviour".

Working methods

Visible police in reflective vests and visible police vans is the basis for the mobile police station.

We have made use of bicycles at Stureplan. This is something which has been seen as positive. The bikes make it possible to be flexible and therefore the police can expand the patrolling area and police can arrive faster when something happens.

Frequent contacts with the security guards and a low tolerance to *offensive behaviour*.

Keeping law and order at Stureplan respective Medborgarplatsen has become one of the main goals for the mobile police station. In a number of answers to the evaluation forms the respondents outline how they are able to work with law enforcement for example until midnight by having contacts with the security guards and by confiscating alcohol, but that after midnight, they must work with incidents occurring at that moment.

In most forms the respondents write that they have worked against alcohol-related violence. A common intervention was to intervene quickly.

Avoid disputes or battering.

Patrolling in pairs from bar to bar... From the beginning it was said that we had to patrol on foot within a 500-metre radius. Experience showed that it was not always possible (see Map 1 and Map 2).

Contacts with security guards. Rejection of highly intoxicated persons

Traffic control with breathe-analyser tests.

Co-workers comments:

What works?

Several of the evaluation forms expresses that it has been fun to work. Fun with the public's appreciation, fun with colleagues who come by - if only for a short while. (The ranger estimated) The mounted police were appreciated and were mentioned often in the evaluations. Praise was given to those who work for having good social skills and spending enough time with visitors is also something that the majority of the respondents to the evaluation mention. That it is nice to work in a team and to share tasks when it works well is also something that many point out.

Even other staff praise the mobile police stations.

In an article in Intrapolis it was noted that the mobile police stations eased the burden for other parts of the police force. Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen does not require as many emergency interventions as before.

Many employees agree with and identify Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen with potential trouble spots that can be kept under control by the police presence. Just the fact that by its presence the police officers stopped a fight at an early stage is something that is often pointed out in the evaluation forms.

Many report that the public and the security guards gave them positive feedback. Both the general public and security guards have said to the staff at the station that they find it quieter in the area.

Areas to improve or what can be better?

MOBASA can get better. MOBASA has been problematic and not worked satisfactorily during the period. The problem was identified immediately, but takes time to resolve.

More diversified staff is a desire. Many have held this point of view and on the ground that we want to spread understanding of the role and method of preventing crime.

Logistics has sometimes failed (notably in the holiday period) but the problems will hopefully be resolved gradually.

Help with transporting, for example, persons brought into custody for drunkenness, is something that is often requested.

Toilet is missing and needed.

Heat is missing and needed.

Lighting in the entrance of the tent to increase visibility.

Telephone number to the security guards

The fact that all should wear a uniform (including investigators) so that they can patrol in the area.

Arrange a parking prohibition in the loading area at Birger Jarlsgatan so that the space can be used for vehicle inspections.

Use bicycles to expand the patrolling area.

Share work shifts, because the workload is so high and the possibility to pause and go to the toilet are minimal sharing work shifts might be a suitable solution.

The that other commitments are forgotten, for example that young people and the work with young people has not been prioritised by the partners to the same extent as in the action plan for the neighbourhood police.

The link to City Centre Weekend posting is important - and can be developed. The tactical approach to developing good visibility, availability and response, the development of collaboration with other agencies

is also of importance.

Can we get help with the traffic controls at Stureplan until 04.00?

A refrigerator is missing, we need to keep the food somewhere.

Reporting must be a priority, must be able to report without overtime.

Investigators have sometimes not had anything to do. Therefore, many people suggest that we should have uniformed personnel instead.

A report on the incident linked to safety at work has been submitted during period. Many describe the stressful working environment in the evaluation forms although they also describe the tasks as varied.

Cost-effective

Is it really cost effective to stand at Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen? Is it the hot spots and hot times in force at the moment? These are issues that come up occasionally in the forms. Of course, the question of the place and time is always discussed, but one example of why the times are as they are. Is illustrated by the following chart (which was prepared in connection with the application for video surveillance at Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen, and the application has been lodged at the county administrative board.

Figure 2. Point of time for the offences/crimes committed at Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen. Figure 2 shows that crime at Medborgarplatsen increases markedly from 21.00 in the evening onwards and also declines after 04.59. More than 75 percent of crimes take place between 21.00 hours and 04.59 hours. The corresponding period for Stureplan is 23.00-06.59, when just over 90 percent of the reported crimes happen. All crimes do NOT occur on Friday or Saturday evenings, but the time of crime in some areas are concentrated to evenings and nights with crime occurring earlier in the evening at the Medborgarplatsen and slightly later in the Stureplan. Therefore, the mobile police station have different opening hours.

The costs to keep the mobile police station staffed amounted to 4 201 000 SEK in 2006. The cost include wages and rent as well as other operational expenses. For the year 2007 City pmd has requested 5 755 000 SEK for the mobile police stations. City's budget for 2006 is estimated at around 669 100 000 SEK.

Controll area

Often, critics to this type of special actions point at the fact that criminality just tends to move to another area. As crime in general has gone down in the City during the studied period, it is unlikely that any other place has been affected by a shift of the crimes due to the mobile police station's preventive work. The increase in the number of crimes in the geographical area around Stureplan could be explained by the fact that the restaurant and bar district near Stureplan is geographically so much wider than Stureplan in itself so that the visibility in Stureplan does not solve the problems that exist around the corner (for example Kungsgatan, Birger Jarlsgatan down to the Berzelii Park, etc.). This could be a good argument for redefining the visibility concept at Stureplan.

The mobile police stations are here to stay

One conclusion we draw is that the mobile police station can only have an effect on reported crime in a limited area. Chronologically, we see that the effect has levelled out. I.e. the mobile stations had an effect on a larger area at the beginning of the period, while at the end of this period, it was only the area patrolled where the positive effects could be noted (see the report where the outcome of May and June are studied). The police stations had an impact on a larger area during May and June, compared to July-October may be due to the fact that the general public got used to the presence of the mobile police station. People know where the police are and where they are not present. The deterrence works only on the field where police stations are patrolling. There are also studies showing that violent crime is a class of crimes that most people are willing to commit, depending on the level of provocation. This is something that make violent crime extra difficult to work with, and the idea of the police as a capable guardian may just mean that we must physically be there and be visible. When you are no longer visible, are you still a capable guardian? If you measure the total number of crimes in the base areas you get contradictory numbers.

In Stureplan base areas which extends far beyond Stureplan the overall crime increased by 7 percent while at Medborgarplatsen it decreased by 15 percent. The area around the Stureplan has more bars and has several restaurants which stay open until 5 o'clock. Issues that arise and that the criminal intelligence unit should examine closer are: What kind of criminality do we find at Stureplan? What crimes does it consist of, what are the times, the actors, how does Medborgarplatsen differ from Stureplan, what other efforts have been made at Medborgarplatsen and Stureplan?

The occupational and environmental health

The mobile police station had no heating, no toilets and the problem of finding new routines for the work were all traceable problems in the evaluation forms. Also finding new ways of working with the partners; restaurant managers / security guards / volunteers / county authorities / the Swedish church, etc. is a co-operation that is seen as a successful way of working according to the police experience and modern research. For example would *differentiated closing times* lead to less friction in queues for taxis and fast food restaurants which generate some of the violence in public places.

Söderandan and Korskyrkan are two partners that also physically are located in the same area and in part during the same time as the mobile police stations. Additional partners like Mums and Dads in the city, and field workers come by the mobile stations. Can the synergy between partners be developed, and how, in such cases?

Further expansion?

City has other hot spots and hot times in the area, such as Sergels torg, Slussen and Fridhemsplan and Vasagatan and Odenplan. To identify more places and times and to obtain a permit to put up mobile police stations in several places in the city may be of interest to reach the crimes which the mobile police stations should have an impact on by its visibility. Although the economic factors must be considered as well.

The other local police stations in the county focus on young people, something that the mobile police station does not do at the moment. Both Stureplan and Medborgarplatsen have restaurants and bars for an older audience. With the possibility to park the police busses on places where youngsters gather we might be able to have an impact on juvenile delinquency.

References:

Crime statistics from the police

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Frågeformulär från de mobila poliskontoren

Intrapolis

LUPP – en lokal uppföljnings- och prognosprocedur i problemorienterat arbete mot brott. Idéskrift 8. Brottsförebyggande rådet (2001)

Synpunkter från enskilda poliser